Growing Up Digital
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A road map for our journey today

- Set the context – My pathways and perspectives
- Understand our 21st century obstacles and digital distractions
- Define “Digital Media Literacy” for adults
- Acknowledge and address the concerns
- Identify what matters most for young children in the digital age
- Describe why children and families need mindful media mentors
- Begin and end with relationships
Pathways – How I got here today

About Erikson Institute

Our vision is that every adult who works with young children or on their behalf will be knowledgeable, aware, skilled, and alive to the possibilities of each child’s life.
Digital obstacles for 20th century adults
Clinging to old tools for new tasks

A Provocation – The more you connect the less you connect

- Young children learn media habits from the important adults in their lives.
- How can we nudge ourselves from “adults behaving badly” to becoming mindful media mentors for young children and families?

Images credits: Ogilvy (for the Center For Psychological Research, Shenyang)
Do you own a smartphone or does your smartphone own you?

- Smartphone dependent
- Phantom ring/vibration syndrome…
- “Let me just check my email”
- “Parental controls” for parents

Do we need a digital detox?

- Digitally preoccupied
- Digital distractions
- Digital dependence
- Digital disconnections
Do you preach…
...what you practice?

Like father, like son.

“IT keeps me from looking at my phone every two seconds.”

Adults are media mentors and role models – how do we make sure that’s good news for children, parents and families?

We are the old and the analog...
Were you born digital (after 2000)...analog (between 1980-1999)...or BPC (before 1980)?

*Our narrow bandwidth...*

- Born in another time
- Our analog skills are valuable but not sufficient
- Need to confront our digital shortcomings
- 21st century learning for 21st century teaching and parenting
- Use tech to learn how to use tech...
Paper is not dead...yet
Our digital media literacy matters

- Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Experience
- Competencies
- Leading to fluency
- Resulting in intentional and appropriate selection and use
- DML is essential for adults who work with, or on behalf of, young children, parents and families

Our digital media literacy comes first

- What do we need to know and be able to do to intentionally and appropriately select, use, integrate and evaluate technology?
- What attitudes, dispositions and behaviors are necessary?
- What foundational knowledge, essential skills, hands-on experiences do we need?
- How do we gain confidence and competence to become more intentional?
- How can we narrow the personal and professional use gap?
- How do we apply what we already know about:
  - Child development, early learning and early literacy
  - Developmentally appropriate practice
  - Best practices in teaching and learning
  - Tools for family engagement
We are the Jetsons...
...so we need media literacy in 2015

Media literacy is about helping children develop the life skills they need to become thinkers and makers in the multimedia environment that is their reality...

It is precisely because our culture surrounds us with media that we need to model healthy and productive ways to integrate digital media technologies into our lives.

Faith Rogow

Follow Fred’s lead...Use tech “with” rather than “instead of”
We have to help give children tools, building blocks for active play. And the computer is one of those building blocks. No computer will ever take the place of wooden toys or building blocks. But that doesn’t mean they have to be mutually exclusive.
Beware the either/or false dichotomy
It can be “We are family”
and “Wii are family”

It’s OK to read
and…
and even…
...and enjoy them all!
What’s wrong with these pictures?

Acknowledge the concerns

• Too much passive, non-interactive use
• Exposure to inappropriate content
• Commercial messages and in-app sales aimed at children
• Negative impact on social-emotional development – socially isolating, interrupts adult-child relationship
Acknowledge the concerns

• Displacement – Replaces “ECE essentials” like hands-on, creative and open-ended play, construction, small manipulatives...
• Decreases physical activity / Increases obesity
• Reduces outdoor time
• Increased behavioral issues and attention problems
• More aggression / desensitization to violence
• Increased sleep disruptions and fatigue

More concerns

“Adults behaving badly” – adult media use, misuse, over use, digital distractions, always on tech and background TV...
• We’re all guilty of checking our devices too often
• Screen Time: Adults need to lead by example
• Parents Are Digital Hypocrites: Adults think they’re setting limits but inadvertently teach kids to overuse gadgets
More concerns

- Digital dependence
- Digital pacifier
- Digital babysitter
- Author Sherry Turkle
  - Alone Together
  - Connected but Alone
  - Reclaiming Conversation
- Mindful Media Mentors

We have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology, to devise intelligent ways of developing and limiting our power, and to put technology at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral.

Pope Francis
Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8

A joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College

ECE “essentials” matter

- Creativity, curiosity and wonder
- Open-ended exploration
- Unstructured, active, imaginative play
- Loose parts and hands-on learning
- Authentic and deep engagement
- Outdoor play and nature
- Solitary and shared experiences
- Interactions and relationships
Lisa Guernsey’s 3Cs matter

- **CONTENT** How does this help children engage, express, imagine, or explore?
- **CONTEXT** How does it complement, and not interrupt, children’s natural play?
- The Unique **CHILD** How do we choose the right tech tools and experiences for each child’s needs, abilities, interests and development stage?
- ...and let’s add one more C - **CONNECTIONS**

Relationships matter

- Young children learn best in the context of interactions and relationships with tuned-in, attentive, responsive and caring adults
- **Co-viewing >>** joint engagement with media – using media together leads to more learning
- Media use to encourage pro-social behaviors and promote healthy social and emotional development
- Use technology as a tool to strengthen relationships with adults and peers
A neighborly reminder...

*Computers can be useful machines, especially when they help people communicate in caring ways with each other...*

Fred Rogers, *Dear Mister Rogers, Does It Ever Rain in Your Neighborhood?*

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Gather around the screen

“Joint engagement with media” is a digital age phrase but the idea is not new. Think about your childhood and remember a time when members of your family or you and your friends gathered around the TV, radio, stereo, VCR, etc., for a shared media experience.
Follow Fred’s lead…
Empower parents and engage families

Strengthen a parent…
and you strengthen a child.

What parents need from media mentors

1. A good role model and tour guide
2. A trusted source
3. Resources and recommendations
4. Opportunities for parent play time
5. Empowering tips for promoting a healthy media diet and positive family media ecology at home

You already have what it takes. VROOM
A healthy media diet matters

All screens are not created equal

• Consider screen exposure throughout the day and across settings
• Shift from “how much” they watch to “what they watch”
• Use media “with” rather than “instead of”
• Place limits on passive use
• Avoid inappropriate content and commercial messages

A healthy media diet matters

All screens are not created equal

• Look for media experiences that are interactive, include positive interactions with others, and give the child control
• Emphasize relationships and joint engagement with media
• Advocate for a digital age definition of “screen-time” – AAP, Caring for Our Children, ECERS, QRIS, Accreditation, Teacher Preparation...
Family media ecology matters

- Understand parental influence as the primary media role model
- Be aware of use – when, by who, where, for what and for how long
- Understand that content is as important as length of time
- Find trusted sources of media recommendations
- Place limits on passive use and avoid inappropriate content

*TV may be the only appliance that is more useful after it is turned off.*

Fred Rogers

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Family media ecology matters

- Avoid background TV
- Limit screen media before bedtime
- No TVs in children’s bedrooms
- Turn off media and digital devices during meals
- Be aware of private tech use replacing traditional public use
- Watch together – joint engagement with media
- Plan for unplugged time

“What can we do when we turn off the screen?”
Updated tips from the AAP

- Treat media as you would any other environment in your child’s life.
- Set limits and encourage playtime.
- Families who play together, learn together.
- Be a good role model.
- Know the value of face-to-face communication.

Updated tips from the AAP

- Create tech-free zones
- Don’t use technology as an emotional pacifier
- Apps for kids – do your homework
- It’s OK for your teen to be online
- Remember: Kids will be kids
Media and digital devices are an integral part of our world today. The benefits of these devices, if used moderately and appropriately, can be great. But, research has shown that face-to-face time with family, friends, and teachers, plays a pivotal and even more important role in promoting children's learning and healthy development. Keep the face-to-face up front, and don't let it get lost behind a stream of media and tech.

*Children and Media – Tips for Parents, AAP, September 2015*

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**My messages for media mentors**

- Relationships matter
- Quality time together can include screens
- How you use technology is as important as how much you use it.
- Technology complements the real world, it doesn’t replace it
- Connect screen experiences to real life
- Use media to encourage creativity, curiosity and wonder

*And a few final messages form my media mentor*
Computers can be useful machines, especially when they help people communicate in caring ways with each other...

Mister Rogers and Jeff Erlanger
Fred Rogers Company

My hunch is that if we allow ourselves to give who we really are to the children in our care, we will some way inspire cartwheels in their hearts.
Follow Fred’s fearless lead…
Be a mindful media manager, mediator & mentor

We all got to be who we are today with the help of many other people. Nobody can successfully manage in the world without the investment of others.
...Let’s not get so fascinated by what the technology can do that we forget what it can’t do...It’s through relationships that we grow best and learn best.
TEC Curation – Healthy Media Habits

Growing Up Digital Chip Donohue

Slides and resources at www.teccenter.erikson.edu